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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

II. CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

B. Inequality in access to education and other means of maximizing the use of women's capacities

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that everyone has a right to education. This has often been neglected in the list of basic human needs and has only recently received more attention, when economists and development planners recognized that education and human resource development are key factors in promoting development. There is evidence that education has an impact on health, mortality, productivity, household income and fertility rates. The social returns to a woman's education go far beyond individual welfare and are vital to national development. Potential economic gains result from the expansion of women's income earning capacities. Special efforts need to be made to reach the excluded and the vulnerable, in particular, girls in some regions and countries, girls with disabilities, girls of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups.

2. Several international instruments put forward the rights of girls and women to education. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination calls for the elimination of discrimination against women in order to ensure equal rights with men in the field of education. 1/ It asks for the same

conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and obtaining of diplomas at all levels of schooling. The Convention requests access to the same curricula and examinations, to scholarships and other study grants, to programmes of continuing education including adult and functional literacy programmes and to information on family planning. It addresses the drop-out rates of female students and asks for the provision of special programmes for girls who leave school prematurely. It stresses that girls should be given the same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education. It recognizes the need to eliminate stereotyped roles of men and women at all levels and in all aspects of education. 2/

3. The World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, drew attention to the gender gap in educational opportunities and its consequences for human development. Article 3.3 emphasizes that the education of girls and women constitutes a priority. It calls in particular for the elimination of all gender stereotyping in education and in particular for a supportive policy context. 3/

4. The Convention on the Rights of the Child 4/ contains provisions to the right to education, including the right to compulsory and free primary education and access to all to secondary, vocational and higher education. It also claims equal rights for girls and boys to education and asserts the importance of education as a social and cultural right. It affirms that every child has the right to a non-discriminatory education that fully respects cultural identity and language needs.

1. Education and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies

5. The Forward-looking Strategies consider education to be "the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women". 5/ Recommendations related to education for women are set out as an area of development, but references to the need for formal and non-formal education and training are made in many other sections of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Governments agreed to encourage public and private schools to examine educational materials and textbooks and to eliminate discriminatory gender-stereotyping, to redesign textbooks that reflect a positive and dynamic image of women and to include women's studies in the curricula. They also agreed to take steps to diversify women's vocational training and to create integrated systems for training that have direct links with employment needs and future trends. The Forward-looking Strategies do not call for parity of women's enrolment in primary, secondary and university education but rather for "equal opportunities" in access to resources, especially education and training, and do not consider the issue of completion (repetition and drop-out) and the need for teacher training on gender issues.

6. The first review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in 1990 gives evidence that changes have taken place in formal education. 6/ In the decade from 1970 to 1980, programmes to improve women's access to education were effective in many regions, especially for younger women. Equality between men and women in school enrolment was achieved in several regions, although not in those where the majority of the world's population is located. However, it

shows that this change affected only a small number of countries. Modest progress had been achieved in Africa, which could be largely attributed to national development plans and the fact that education at the primary level had been free in many countries. In Asia and the Pacific, the pervasive influence of traditional social attitudes and feudal patriarchal systems were identified as the main obstacles to women's emancipation and education. In Latin America and the Caribbean, major differences exist between countries and between rural and urban areas. Indigenous populations have less access, while opportunities at higher-income levels were nearly equal. Few countries seemed to have engaged in a comprehensive strategy to advance women's education.

7. Following the 1990 first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies on education and training, the Economic and Social Council adopted the following conclusions:

> "Recommendation III. In the area of education, both formal and non-formal, Governments should promote the training of teachers on gender issues, co-education and professional counselling. Governments should complete the revision of textbooks expeditiously, if possible by 1995, in accordance with national law and practice, in order to eliminate sex-biased presentations and should, in conjunction with women's groups, take steps to reduce the stereotyping of women in the mass media, whether by self-policing on the part of the media or by other measures.
>
> "Governments, non-governmental organizations, women's groups and all other entities concerned should take steps to amend formal and informal educational systems at all levels to promote change in the psychological, social and traditional practices that are the foundation of the de facto obstacles to women's progress.
>
> "The United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other appropriate organizations of the United Nations system should continue to analyse the extent and effects of stereotyping of women and implement innovative programmes to combat it."
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> ...
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> "Recommendation X. Governments that have not already done so should reorient resources to ensure women's equal access to education and training at all levels and in all fields and, in collaboration with women's groups and non-governmental organizations, should make special efforts to remove all gender-related differences in adult literacy by the year 2000. Programmes should be established to ensure that parents and teachers provide equal educational opportunities for girls and boys. In particular, encouragement should be given to promoting the study by girls of scientific and technological subjects, particularly those corresponding to national development priorities, and to preparing girls for full participation in the economy and in public life. In order to fulfil these commitments, appropriate measures should be taken at the national and international levels to ensure revitalization of growth on a long-term basis.

"The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other organizations of the United Nations system should give special priority to eliminating female illiteracy and to monitoring efforts to ensure that women have equal access to all levels of education and training." 7/

2. Progress achieved and persistent gaps in female education and training

(a) Literacy

8. Nine hundred and five million men and women are estimated to be illiterate world wide; 65 per cent of whom are women. 8/ In all regions of the world, the illiteracy rate of women has been steadily declining. With the exception of Africa, important progress has been made in eliminating both adult illiteracy and the differentials between female and male illiteracy. High illiteracy rates in Africa and Asia and the Pacific are a reflection of past discrimination and lack of opportunities. In the present age group 15-24 years, illiteracy rates are significantly lower due to higher levels of school enrolment.

9. Global figures on literacy mask disparities between countries within a region and between rural and urban areas. In the Caribbean region, for example, very low levels of illiteracy are reported for the majority of countries (Cuba, 2 per cent, Barbados, Guyana, the Netherlands Antilles, 10 per cent), whereas a few continue to have consistently high rates (Haiti, 65 per cent in 1985, Saint Lucia, a 54 per cent illiteracy rate in 1991). Countries with high numbers of indigenous populations have higher illiterate ratios, in particular among women. Guatemala reports that 80 per cent of the indigenous women are illiterate. Despite a general improvement in Asia and the Pacific - for example, female illiteracy in south-eastern Asia has decreased to 24 per cent - the significantly high illiteracy rates among women still persist in that region. There are 62 per cent of female illiterates in South Asia, indicating a 5.5 per cent increase compared to the 1985 figure. In the developed countries, the number of people who have no literacy or numeracy skills is minimal and reaches higher percentages only among immigrant populations and people living in poverty.

10. Figures on illiteracy do not reflect the level of functional illiteracy. As a result of low levels of schooling and educational achievements, functional illiteracy is growing among men and women in many countries, even some of the most developed, thus leaving large numbers of the population partially illiterate and with no or little knowledge of history, current events on societal problems. Evidence suggests that considerable numbers of the adult populations in some developed countries are having difficulties with the basic skills of reading, writing and basic mathematics, although women score better than men in literacy and numeracy. These functional illiterates often lack the knowledge of basic skills, such as how to operate machines and equipment. Functional literacy has an impact on income-generating activities, hygiene and protection of the environment.

Table II.B.1. Average percentage of men and women who were illiterate in 1980 and 1990 census rounds, by region

Region	1980 round		1990 round	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
A. Over 15 years of age				
Africa	51.8	71.8	44.6	61.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	18.2	23.3	14.3	16.0
Western Europe and other	5.7	11.4	8.7	9.9
Asia and the Pacific	31.8	49.3	21.7	34.3
Eastern Europe	1.5	4.9	0.9	2.3
B. 15-24 years of age				
Africa	35.8	55.7	35.6	51.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	9.0	10.3	7.5	6.9
Western Europe and other	1.0	1.0	2.6	1.2
Asia and the Pacific	19.7	32.6	10.3	17.9
Eastern Europe	0.5	0.9	..	..
C. 25-44 years of age				
Africa	50.7	74.4	35.3	58.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	14.1	19.4	5.3	7.3
Western Europe and other	2.5	4.7	5.5	3.7
Asia and the Pacific	26.7	44.7	20.2	35.8
Eastern Europe	0.7	2.4	..	..

Source: Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, based on information contained in Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT), version 3, 1994.

11. Many national reports suggest that illiterate women have a great desire for learning. This strong motivation coupled with attractive programmes is a driving force for the acceptance and success of literacy programmes. Illiterate women are reported to regret that they have not been in school and consider

illiteracy a major obstacle to their advancement. Even if women are not specifically targeted by literacy programmes, there is a considerable increase in the number of female participants in some countries. There is evidence that the illiteracy rate among women is dropping at a faster rate than that of men. In Egypt, for example, urban illiteracy for men remained constant between 1976 and 1986, while it dropped by 9.5 per cent for women during the same period. In the Caribbean, more women than men have been attracted to adult education literacy programmes geared at educating adults and exposing them to income-generating opportunities, developing positive attitudes and sensitizing youth to the dignity of work.

12. Mass literacy campaigns constitute one effective strategy for elimination of widespread illiteracy among adult women within a set time-frame. Such campaigns have been carried out in the past in China, the former USSR, Viet Nam, Cuba and the United Republic of Tanzania, among other countries. India is one of the countries undertaking mass campaigns for literacy in various districts. Literacy campaigns are successful when they take into account the social condition of women and are linked to income-generating activities. Some countries report on the obstacles they have encountered. Major obstacles for successful implementation of literacy campaigns are the discontinuity of funds, the financial and material incapacity of communities to take charge of the training, the decreasing motivation of volunteers and irregularities in the follow-up activities. If there are no continuing education opportunities, women who already know how to read and write cannot apply and further develop their skills. Trainers play a catalyst role in literacy campaigns. Some countries recognize the necessity to clearly define literacy policy and to involve young people and especially women as instructors in the literacy process.

(b) Primary education and secondary education

13. In the past decade, substantive and successful efforts were made to achieve universal primary education and to attract girls to primary schools. On a regional level, girls' enrolment has achieved parity with boys', except in Africa and Asia (see table II.B.2). The lowest rates persist in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia. In the ESCAP region as a whole, mean years for schooling for girls have increased from 2.99 in 1980 to 3.58 in 1990, while in South Asia, girls spent on average only 1.26 years in school in 1990 (1980: 1.16). Some countries report significant increases in female enrolment, which reflects a political will to promote girls' education. As an example, Bhutan has increased primary school enrolment for girls by 68 per cent since 1984, to 93 per cent, while boys registered a growth of only 11 per cent. The report explains that a special effort has been made to constantly gain the confidence of the parents to send their daughters to school in a country where the value of education in a modern environment was not fully appreciated before 1984, and the first modern school opened in the 1950s.

14. Enrolment in secondary education is reaching parity in the developed countries and Eastern Europe (see table II.B.3). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the ratio of girls to boys is higher, indicating that more girls now remain in secondary education than boys. In 11 countries within the region, girls' enrolment rates exceed those of boys. The increase in the ratio of girls to boys in the African and Asia and Pacific region in only one generation

Table II.B.2. Average ratio of girls to boys in primary education, by region, 1970-1990

Region	1970	1980	1990
Africa	65	74	79
Latin America and the Caribbean	94	95	95
Western Europe and other	95	95	95
Asia and the Pacific	66	78	84
Eastern Europe	94	94	96
World	77	84	87

Source: Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, based on information contained in Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT), version 3, 1994.

Table II.B.3. Average ratio of girls to boys in secondary education, by level and region, 1970-1990

Region	1970	1980	1990
Africa	46	57	69
Latin America and the Caribbean	98	107	109
Western Europe and other	90	98	98
Asia and the Pacific	58	70	77
Eastern Europe	97	91	94
World	67	80	85

Source: Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, based on information contained in Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT), version 3, 1994.

(1970-1990) is considerable but is still far from reaching parity. Some developed countries report significant increases, which are not due only to the expansion of the educational opportunities at secondary level. In Australia, the number of girls staying in school to year 12 has increased from less than 37.3 per cent in 1980 to 82 per cent in 1992 (compared with 72.5 per cent for boys). In the United States, women have been narrowing the education gap. The figure of women completing their high school increased from 53 per cent in 1970 to 75 per cent in 1990.

15. In Latin America, the quantitative progress achieved does not take into account the increment in late enrolments, grade repetition, temporary and definitive drop-outs. Access to schooling and appropriation of educational and cultural benefits is affected by urban or rural residence and by social class. Poor and rural women are more likely to be illiterate, to have no access to training programmes and higher education. Since the public educational system is fragmented, the poor attend low-quality schools, and vulnerable groups are most affected. Great disparities continue to persist among countries and within them, between urban and rural zones, among different ages and social classes.

16. The African region remains the region with the lowest levels of education. Almost half of the children of primary school age are out of school, the majority of them girls. Nevertheless, the countries of the African region have made an important effort on the supply side to cater for the educational needs of their growing populations. On a global level, primary enrolments in Africa more than tripled between 1960 and 1989, while they have doubled in Asia and Latin America. This expansion was subsequently reduced in the 1980s. In many countries with high population growth, the planning of new educational facilities did not meet the actual need. The educational sector in Nigeria, for example, has continued to expand rapidly. The number of primary schools doubled from nearly 20,000 in 1975/76, when the universal primary education was launched, to over 37,000 by 1982/83. The number of pupils, however, increased from 6 million to 14.5 million during that period. An increase of 85 per cent of the supply side stands against an increase of 140 per cent on the demand side.

17. The economic crisis and measures of structural adjustment in the eighties had their impact on the educational system. Expressed as a proportion of their national income during the 1980s, developing countries in general maintained the public expenditures on education. However, the significant population growth with the low level of national incomes actually brought the budgetary cuts in public expenditures on education. Thus, public expenditures on education per capita in sub-Saharan Africa fell by more than one half between 1980 and 1989. In Zaire, for example, a decrease from 3.6 per cent in 1980 to 1.7 per cent in 1985 and to 1.4 per cent in 1988 brought with it a decrease in the quality of education and lower enrolment. In Togo, such a situation caused the closure of schools and consequently a decrease in enrolment.

18. The political will to encourage girls' education is a prerequisite for increasing enrolment. There is evidence that the increase in per capita GNP positively affects female enrolment rates and women generally move towards parity with men. However, this does not occur automatically. If there are no gender-specific educational policies, the countries even with relatively high

per capita GNP show disappointing achievements in terms of progress in female enrolment; whereas the countries with low per capita GNP show remarkable success because of deliberate educational policies taken to promote female education. For example, in Indonesia, through affirmative action programmes the female/male disparity at secondary level was reduced by more than half during the 1980s. In Malawi, 33 per cent of the total secondary school enrolment slots are reserved for girls. In Bangladesh, taking into account the cultural constraints, separate secondary schools for girls were established at sub-district level.

19. An important contributor to low female enrolment rates in education is the cost factor. The annual cost per pupil for primary education may be as high as a rural family's annual cash income. The annual cost of educating a child in secondary school is even greater. If a family decides to educate a child, culture and economics may favour the male. In some countries, the introduction of free secondary education considerably benefited the girls; previously if there were not sufficient family resources for education, they were kept at home.

20. The enrolment of girls differs significantly in rural and urban areas. In Mali, for example, where only 17-20 per cent of girls are enrolled, the difference between rural and urban areas ranges from 13 to 59 per cent, respectively.

21. Many countries reported on high drop-out rates. In some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean the drop-out rates for boys are higher than for girls. Boys are leaving school in order to earn an income. In countries with low levels of girls' schooling, drop-out rates for them are higher. Customs and traditions also have an impact on girls' school attendance.

22. There are socio-economic and cultural obstacles for girls' access to education. These obstacles and a generally low perception of the value or utility of educating girls have an impact on their educational performance. Poor health and nutrition, early pregnancy and marriage, traditional practices such as circumcision, for example, further aggravate the situation. In some countries, only a small percentage of girls passes the primary school-leaving examinations. Several projects have been launched to remedy this situation, such as the abolishing of school fees for girls who do not repeat classes, social mobilization campaigns and the introduction of a bursary scheme for girls which provides tuition, uniforms and learning materials. Where equal access for girls is achieved and guaranteed and women's education is not considered a low priority, girls achieve better results and higher scores than boys in a number of countries. In the Caribbean and in some Latin American countries, girls perform better than boys in terminal examinations at the secondary level. In the United Kingdom, girls currently out-perform boys in science subjects in examinations in the age group 16-18.

23. On a global level, the rate of distribution among various subjects of specialization reveals a large gap in the female/male ratio in arts, literature, science and mathematics. Female secondary students are clustered in traditional fields of study. This is a decisive factor in determining whether women enrol in university to major in non-traditional areas and pursue vocational and technical or industrial training. When selecting their fields of

specialization, girls tend not to focus as much as boys on long-term planning and not to take into account career choices and labour-market conditions.

(c) Tertiary education

24. Women are increasingly entering colleges and universities. However, progress in that area depends on the region. In developed countries women and men are approaching parity in higher education. In Latin America and the Caribbean and in Eastern Europe, women outnumbered men at that level; in Africa they are far behind (table II.B.4). However, even in the African region measures are being taken to correct the situation. In Uganda, for example, due to the implementation of special measures, the share of girls in the national university increased from 25 per cent in 1985-1990 to 33 per cent in 1993 .

25. In China, the number of female postgraduates increased by 157 per cent from 1985 to 1992; of female college and university graduates, by 143 per cent; and of female graduates from secondary vocational schools, by 157 per cent. The national reports cite various reasons for the increases besides the general expansion of the educational system. In some cases, the elimination of gender-exclusive admission practices opened the door to educational establishments which had been closed to women. Other countries undertook reforms of their higher education systems and incorporated in them various post-secondary study programmes that attracted women. One reason given for the predominance of female students is the early entrance of men into the labour force, which prevents them from completing their degree of higher education.

26. A few countries with low female enrolment rates in tertiary education reported on measures of affirmative action taken to encourage young women to pursue their education. Australia is linking funding allocations to institutions of higher education to the progress achieved towards equity goals, while setting specific targets for the increase of the number of women in non-traditional courses and postgraduate study by 1995. In Sweden, the Government approved a 10-point programme for monitoring efforts to promote equality between women and men in higher education which proposed steps to increase the number of female graduate students.

27. The majority of female students are still enrolled in the traditionally "female" fields of studies. The highest increase in the number of female graduates has continued to occur in fields such as humanities, fine arts and education. In the United States, where college enrolment of women now exceeds that of men, the majority of women still choose subjects of study that are less likely to lead to higher paying jobs.

28. However, more and more women are entering formerly male-dominated fields such as law, medicine and business administration. There is an increase in the number of women studying law and business in Latin America and Caribbean (table II.B.5). In science and technology women are catching up to men almost in all regions, except Africa, though even in that region there is a positive shift (table II.B.6).

Table II.B.4. Average ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education, by region, 1970-1990

Region	1970	1980	1990
Africa	20	30	32
Latin America and the Caribbean	72	74	106
Western Europe and other	53	72	94
Asia and the Pacific	46	63	84
Eastern Europe	78	106	104
World	46	61	75

Source: Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, based on information contained in Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT), version 3, 1994.

Table II.B.5. Average ratio of girls to boys in law and business in tertiary education, by region, 1970-1990

Region	1970	1980	1990
Africa	12	43	36
Latin America and the Caribbean	30	92	97
Western Europe and other	25	54	85
Asia and the Pacific	25	56	70
Eastern Europe	64	134	124
World	25	63	102

Source: Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, based on information contained in Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT), version 3, 1994.

Table II.B.6. Average ratio of girls to boys in science and technology fields in tertiary education, by region, 1970-1990

Region	1970	1980	1990
Africa	24	21	24
Latin America and the Caribbean	37	54	80
Western Europe and other	29	49	67
Asia and the Pacific	33	45	70
Eastern Europe	61	81	74
World	32	43	56

Source: Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, based on information contained in Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT), version 3, 1994.

29. Scholarships are one means of encouraging and enabling girls to pursue their education and of guiding them into non-traditional fields. Some developing countries criticize the attribution of scholarships by donor countries on a purely merit basis for those priority areas of study identified for future labour needs. Traditional attitudes often prevail in decisions concerning whether female students should be sent abroad to study. Mentoring programmes have been initiated in a number of developed countries. Senior women scientists mentor schoolgirls and young scientists on how to develop career strategies and paths and how to sustain motivation and inspiration. Vocational counselling and guidance are additional means used to encourage girls to opt for non-traditional career paths. France, for example, launched important campaigns in 1992 and 1993 encouraging girls and young women to pursue technical specializations and professions.

30. The increased number of women in higher education has started to have a visible effect in certain careers that were until recently closed to women. Women who have completed higher degrees are also having an impact on the economy. In Bulgaria, for example, 56 per cent of all economically active persons with academic qualifications are women. Reports from all regions indicate that equal education does not mean equality in professional qualifications or remuneration. In general, the majority of well educated women with university degrees are employed in lower-level jobs, despite higher educational qualifications than men. The low level of quality of the educational results and the loss of contact between education, training and the modern requirements of the labour market have been noted. Wage differences between men and women are greater among young adults with similar education.

There is a growing distortion between the qualifications and expectations of young women, who are more and more educated, and their effective participation in the labour market.

(d) Non-formal education

31. Although formal education is the norm and is advocated for children aged 6-14 years, many children - in particular, girls - fall through the net of formal education because of its inaccessibility, high cost and perceived irrelevancy. The role of non-governmental organizations in non-formal and basic education is being increasingly recognized. In developed countries, non-governmental organizations carry out research and educational campaigns.

32. Non-governmental organizations are essential partners in the provision of basic education in developing countries with low levels of enrolment and urban-to-rural disparities. In many developing countries, non-governmental organizations are working in a complementary fashion to the public education system. They receive increasing support from multilateral and bilateral donor agencies for their work in the field of education and are dependent on financing from abroad.

(i) Pre-school education

33. Pre-school education has grown rapidly over the past 10 years in many regions. Globally, there seem to be no gender differences between girls and boys with regard to enrolment in pre-school education, where and when it is available. Available figures in Latin America and the Caribbean show that supply for pre-school education is directed primarily towards the middle and upper socio-economic strata.

34. With more mothers and fathers both employed and the disappearance of extended families, there is growing need for child care of good quality. Research findings indicate that a child's environment from birth to age three helps to determine his or her cognitive structure and ability to learn. Infants and toddlers need intellectual stimulation, emotional nourishment and social guidance for healthy development. The shaping of gender roles also takes place during this period, and pedagogical interventions - in particular, in kindergartens - can have an impact on later attitudes and behaviour patterns.

35. In many countries, projects have been undertaken to remove gender stereotyping from pre-school education and to make pre-schoolteachers aware of gender bias in attitudes and behaviour.

(ii) Alternative forms of teaching

36. Non-traditional programmes for out-of-school children provide a non-institutional environment based on a learner-centred curriculum and flexible schedule. They have been advocated by many educators as a temporary measure to improve access and performance, in particular for girls and groups of children that cannot be reached by or integrated into the formal educational system.

37. Programmes in non-formal education have been carried out in many countries - Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, India, Nepal, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania and others. Specific conditions for success are the location of the classrooms in the local community, competent teachers recruited locally, free education with no hidden costs, and convenient class schedules that take into account the girls' household and agricultural responsibilities. Girls in regions and cultures most resistant to female formal education are most eager to attend those schools and perform very successfully. One example is the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, which started non-formal primary education in 1985 and has expanded to 4,500 experimental schools, teaching 100,000 children; 70 per cent are girls from rural landless families.

(iii) Adult education

38. Activities in the field of continuing education for women are abundant and rich in their diversity and range from literacy, income generation and politics to creative and spiritual programmes. They are carried out by a variety of organizations, including non-governmental organizations, political parties, educational institutions and foundations. Educational activities for adult women are a major component to awareness-raising and increasing self-confidence among women. Training in legal literacy, for example, has gained importance since it is a necessary tool for making women aware of their human rights. Vocational training, training on the job, and training for income generation and self-employment are important features.

39. Adult education programmes have been a vital resource for educationally disadvantaged women and young adult females, even if they are not specifically targeting women. Life-long learning needs more attention in times of rapid social and technical changes. Women are increasingly taking advantage of training opportunities offered to them.

(e) Vocational training

40. The successful completion of education at the secondary level is not sufficient to prepare women to enter the labour market; technical and vocational training is usually considered necessary. Compared to the career paths of men, women's professional life is characterized by frequent interruptions and changes of orientation, voluntary or not. Women still take responsibility for the bulk of the work done in the home, so they are looking for possibilities to reconcile working and family duties. Women who interrupt their careers for maternity leave and care-taking or who are displaced by unemployment need training and retraining in order to re-enter the labour market. A life cycle approach to employment is therefore needed and requires training and frequent retraining. However, many education and training policies for women are not sufficiently adapted to the changing patterns of demand in the labour market. Women frequently do not have the same access as men to ongoing training in the workplace so as to upgrade skills and promote their career development. Many training and retraining schemes designed to increase women's access to jobs remain insufficiently developed. In addition, they often direct women to a limited number of fields where career opportunities are limited. Few countries give special regard to the training of single parents and women re-entering the labour market as well as unemployed women. Some countries conduct special

programmes to enhance long-term employability of certain target groups, such as young teenage mothers.

41. Obstacles to the technical and vocational education of women include inadequate knowledge of mathematics and science, limited opportunities for women to study technical subjects, inadequate policies for promoting technical and vocational education for women, and a reluctance by employers to recruit qualified women for technical jobs. Many training programmes for women have been restricted to traditional domestic activities such as sewing, cooking, embroidery and child care. In developing countries, many vocational training programmes are concentrated in the capital cities and a few provinces. Although many women attend these programmes, they remain clustered in typical female jobs, and only a few enrol in technical schools which are oriented towards the modern industrial sector, engineering, agriculture, forestry and handicrafts.

(f) Education for special groups of girls and women

42. In many countries, there has been markedly less educational improvement among particular groups of girls such as migrants, aborigines, girls with disabilities, or girls living in poverty. Many countries report on the special needs of immigrant women, visible minority women and female single parents and have adopted special programmes. Australia, for example, is paying attention to the special needs of girls from non-English-speaking backgrounds, isolated rural areas, aborigines, and economically disadvantaged groups. Canada is providing special scholarships for indigenous persons who want to pursue full-time or part-time post-secondary education. Two thirds of the students who receive such support are women.

43. Countries affected by civil strive, occupation and war report on the suspension of all forms of education. In many cases, primary schools, intermediate, secondary, vocational and teacher training centres are closed for long periods. The effects of these interruptions in education on women and girls become visible only in the long term. In situations of frequent curfews and closures of schools, the number of girls who drop out of the educational system has increased, especially if additional cultural restrictions are put on their mobility.

44. Girls with disabilities often lack access to education and training, because educational facilities cannot cater for their special needs. The cost of providing equal opportunities for girls and women with disabilities is an obstacle that prevents many political decision makers from providing adequate and needed services. Few countries reported on the efforts to provide special educational facilities for girls and women with disabilities.

3. Women in teaching and educational decision-making

45. In all regions the male-to-female ratio in teaching varies according to the level of teaching. The percentage of female teachers is high at the primary level, decreases at the secondary level and declines further in universities and equivalent institutions (see table II.B.7). Women are generally underrepresented in the higher status and higher paying categories. They are

Table II.B.7. Percentage of teachers who are female, by level taught, 1990

	Percentage of female teachers, by level taught, 1990			Numbers of countries/areas included in averages		
	First level	Second level	Universities	First level	Second level	Universities and equivalent
Developed regions	75	51	26	38	29	29
Eastern Europe a/	78	53	31	15	11	12
Western European others	73	50	23	23	18	17
Western Europe	74	52	23	18	13	12
Other developed	72	47	23	5	5	5
Africa	40	25	16	46	38	28
Northern Africa b/	48	35	23	5	5	3
Sub-Saharan Africa	39	23	15	41	33	25
Latin America and Caribbean	73	52	32	28	22	18
Latin America	74	51	27	17	12	8
Central America	74	46	27	6	5	3
South America	74	54	28	11	7	5
Caribbean	72	54	35	11	10	10
Asia and Pacific c/	54	43	24	34	33	29
Eastern Asia d/	67	45	26	6	5	6
South-eastern Asia	57	51	31	7	7	5
Central and Southern Asia	34	26	20	6	6	5
Western Asia	56	45	22	13	13	11
Oceania e/	54	40	23	11	10	4

Sources: Calculated from UNESCO education statistics database and Statistical Yearbook (Paris, various years up to 1993); Statistics Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; national statistical yearbooks; national census reports; and reports of national education ministries or departments.

a/ Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, the former Czechoslovakia, former German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Romania, the former USSR, Ukraine and the former Yugoslavia.

b/ Not including the Sudan, which is included in sub-Saharan Africa.

c/ In obtaining unweighted averages for Asia and the Pacific, only two countries in Oceania are considered: Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

d/ Excluding Japan, which is included under "Developed regions".

e/ Excluding Australia and New Zealand, which are included under "Developed regions".

still underrepresented in educational administration and as teachers of science, where they can have an image-shaping function on boys and girls. In Africa the number of female teachers is especially low, even at the primary level, though there is a positive trend in that area.

46. Although the number of female academics in higher education is increasing globally and has even doubled in some developed countries over the past 20 years, tenure is still heavily concentrated among older, more senior male academics. Female university staff tends to be employed in support positions which lack promotional opportunities, such as specialist or instructor. In other cases, women have been promoted into new fields of studies, and thus the figures increased. The Netherlands reports on an increase in the number of female professors of 4 per cent which can be mainly attributed to newly appointed professors in women's studies.

47. Many countries have taken measures to ensure a greater representation of women in the teaching professions at higher levels. In 1991, Austria enacted changes in the law on university organization which encourage the minister for science and research and the executive bodies of the universities to work towards achieving gender balance in universities.

48. There are few figures on women's active participation in educational planning and decision-making. Some countries have realized that women have to be actively involved in the implementation of educational campaigns. The involvement of women in the formulation of formal educational policies and their active participation in the design of policies and educational projects are key elements for successful literacy campaigns and means of empowerment. In the African region, high-level women educators organized and regrouped in the Forum of African Women Educationalists, which is striving for the achievement of universal primary education and education for all the children in Africa by mobilizing resources, developing and comparing strategies and raising awareness on the importance of girls' education and influencing attitudes of parents and society as a whole.

4. Measures to remove gender bias in education and training

49. The quality of education is a question that goes beyond issues of access and performance. It extends beyond the satisfaction of basic educational needs to improved completion rates, critical awareness and empowerment. Much research has been done on gender stereotypes and bias in education and training in the past decade. The establishment of women's studies programmes at the undergraduate and graduate levels is the most visible acknowledgement of the need to examine gender issues in society and gender bias in education, training and research. Most countries claim to have at least the beginnings of a women's studies curriculum in progress, while in as many as 30 countries of the world women's studies centres and programmes function both inside and outside the formal educational system.

50. The first step undertaken by many developing countries is the removal of gender bias in textbooks. Official textbooks mostly transmit gender-stereotyped values and attitudes and portray women as weak and passive and in traditional

roles as mothers and housewives. Beyond the general recognition that the stereotyping of women should be eliminated from textbooks and curricula and policy declarations on the issue, few Governments have taken far-reaching steps. Some countries have taken action aimed at balancing illustrations and removing gender-biased texts from schoolbooks. Others regret that further guidelines have not yet been established. Few countries have made a systematic attempt to change syllabi and course content or to take further measures to foster non-stereotyped gender roles. The most common curricular innovation is the inclusion of technical and home management subjects at the middle-school level as common learning areas for boys and girls. Reforms of the curricular nomenclature are reported. Some countries have invited school administrators to evaluate the curricula to root out gender bias and sexist language.

51. Separate classes for boys and girls in particular fields of study have been introduced. To create an interest in technology among young girls, summer courses in technology for girls are proposed in some European countries. In a pilot project in Sweden, girls are taught how to speak freely and to present their opinion while boys are taught to write and to listen. Experience has shown that equality must be mainstreamed in the teaching process in order to give boys and girls equal opportunities in education. Teachers and school managers must learn about different conditions for boys and girls at school so that they can take the action necessary to counteract prejudice and gender-related problems.

52. Some Governments have activated a number of instruments to promote gender awareness in education, such as courses for teachers, development of teaching materials, experimental projects and training centres that focus on various actors, including the girls and their parents, teachers and administrators. In some countries, schools use federal funds to implement professional development programmes providing teachers with effective strategies for gender-fair and culturally sensitive teaching.

53. A few countries have established national plans of action to promote greater equality in education. In Sweden, the long-term objective is that neither sex should constitute less than 40 percent of the students in any educational programme and that the proportion of female school leaders should be increased to at least 20 per cent during the first five-year period, a goal that was fully attained and exceeded by 35 per cent by 1993. Since 1985, current education policy in Uganda is encouraging affirmative action in favour of women until gender balance is attained. This policy is being implemented in terms of enrolment in governmental institutions of higher learning.

54. Different forms of awareness-raising programmes and pilot projects are being carried out. Many countries in developed and developing countries have conducted information campaigns to increase girls' awareness of the need for and advantages of continued education. Non-governmental organizations are playing a critical role in carrying out mass public campaigns for awareness-raising. In some countries, special activities for girls have been organized in response to research that shows that girls seem to struggle and suffer more than boys as they move into adulthood. In the United States, the event "Take our Daughters to Work Day" mobilized parents, educators, employers and other caring adults and millions of girls who participated in 1993 and 1994. Similar activities which

challenge and prevent stereotyped career choices of girls have been organized in other countries. Non-governmental organizations have also made contributions in the form of scholarships and awards programmes for training assistance to women who need to upgrade their skills (especially single parents).

5. Action by the international community

55. The most important joint activities of the international community in the field of education was the World Conference on Education for All, convened jointly by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank, in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990. It represented a global consensus on an expanded vision of basic education and a commitment to ensure that the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults are met effectively in all countries. 3/

56. With regard to children in emergency situations, such as refugee children, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as UNESCO and UNICEF, is providing for educational projects within the limits of its budget. The mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) comprises explicitly the provision of education in addition to relief and health services for Palestinian refugees. UNRWA has carried out a variety of educational programmes, including vocational training for women. For a transitional period, students from South Africa are being granted awards through the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa.

57. The bilateral donor community has made significant advances in promoting a gender perspective on basic education. Donors have implemented a variety of projects supporting basic education while focusing on questions of educational access and retention, supporting student and female teachers, assisting in curricula and textbook production and providing teacher training, literacy and vocational training.

Notes

1/ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex, art. 10.

2/ As of 3 November 1994, there were 138 States Parties to the Convention, including all of the States of Latin America and the Caribbean, almost all the States in Europe, South-eastern and Eastern Asia, and a majority of the States in the other regions.

3/ World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March 1990.

4/ General Assembly resolution 44/25, art. 28.

5/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A, paras. 163-173.

6/ "Progress at the national, regional and international levels in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" (E/CN.6/1990/5).

7/ Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15, annex.

8/ UNESCO, World Education Report (Paris, 1993).